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THE EMERGENCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN CHINA

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The last few decades have been remarkable for many changes in China, but one of the most significant and far-reaching is the emergence of the individual. The old culture of China was an impersonal culture. The group, the organization was dominant. The individual was a mere atom finding his life in the great whole. Before the law he did not exist except to be punished. Private life in our sense of the term did not exist. Organizations like the guilds, the secret societies multiplied and grew in power. Superficial observers have compared these to the organizations of the West. There is a difference, however. In the West these organizations are formed by free individuals. In China the individuals are not free. Still, we must not regard the compulsion of these organizations as outward. The compulsion was from within. The personality of each individual was so penetrated by the will of the crowd that free discussion and free action was impossible. In fact the individual was so dominated by the will of the crowd that no other action seemed reasonable.

This characteristic of Chinese culture is inherent in the language. The ideographs do not undergo changes to express person, gender, number, or case. They have idea content only and the situation determines the form which that idea content takes. The same character may be a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb. This produces an indefiniteness in the Chinese language which is sometimes troublesome. This absence of inflection is in contrast to the highly inflected Greek which was developed by a people with a rich personality.

The forms of address and social intercourse are impersonal. There is an atmosphere of selflessness in social

relations. The self and whatever is connected with it is depreciated. The first person is always referred to as my humble self. The wife is spoken of as the "inner man." The children are called my "dirty puppies." To be sure language always lags behind the spirit of the age, and so these forms speak of a culture of a day already past.

The Chinese state did not concern itself with individuals. The central government dealt with the provinces, the provincial government dealt with the prefectures and districts, and the minor officials dealt with the clan and the family. This impersonal government explains to a certain extent the difficulty of the transition to a republic which presupposes individuals. The whole family and often the whole clan or an entire village was punished for the crime of the individual. When the Trans-Siberian railway was torn up by the Hunghutze the Russian government razed every village within a certain distance of the break. In this they followed Chinese law. Under the old system banishment was a favorite form of punishment. The culprit was sent to some distant part of the empire and there allowed to live a free life. He simply reported periodically to the magistrate of the district. As a rule few ran away. They had nowhere to run and they knew that their action would bring punishment upon the whole family. This domination of the group made ostracism from the family the most severe punishment. It practically meant that a man was banished from society.

The adoption of the western legal system, which deals with individuals, is not without its difficulties. A learned Chinese warned his countrymen against the adoption of the western system. He pointed out that a wealthy murderer would find it possible for a few hundred dollars to purchase a substitute who would acknowledge the crime and suffer the penalty of the law. The money thus obtained he would leave to his family whose condition would be improved and who would worship him as a renowned ancestor.

The same impersonal atmosphere dominates the family. Marriage, which among us is regarded as a personal relationship, is in China simply the means of propagating the

family. The young people have no choice in the matter. The mates are chosen by the parents and their compatibility is decided not by their affection, but by the harmony of the astral influences presiding at their birth. Likewise divorce is not decided by the law of the State or Church, nor by the husband, but by the parents of the man.

Child training is quite different from that in the West. In the West the child is limited in his freedom at first, but as he grows he is given larger opportunities to express his individuality. In China the young child is given license to make the whole household uncomfortable by his outbursts. As he grows older the bands of tradition are woven about him. The little girl was allowed to roam about freely till about five years of age and then her feet were bound and likewise her whole life.

The family is controlled by the oldest member and yet his authority is not his own. He is simply the mouthpiece of tradition.

The individual in China is subject to pressure from three directions. There is the pressure from those above him in the state and family. This demands absolute obedience to authority. Then there is the pressure of those on the same level as he is. This pressure deprives him of freedom of competition and self-expression. He is also subject to pressure from those below him. If he would rule he must conform to tradition. Woe betide him who changes traditional rules.

The heart of this impersonal character of Chinese civilization is religious. The conscience, which has been the concrete expression of the self-determination of the westerner, is not in the keeping of the individual, but is in the keeping of the clan and its ancestors. Tradition decides whether a man's action is good or evil. His own personal opinion is of little value. Ancestral worship with all its ramifications holds the individual in his place.

It is not surprising that Buddhism has spread so widely in China and the East. Its doctrine of the annihilation of the ego by merging it with the whole is quite natural in this impersonal atmosphere.

Such a culture has certain advantages which should not be overlooked. The group control keeps the individual moral. The Chinese have been able to govern their country for several thousand years without a police system. In their large cities with a million or more inhabitants no police patroled the streets. Personal life and property were as safe as in our cities. The prison population of China was very small. Even at present the prison population in China is small compared with the whole population. In Peking, a city of over a million people, the inmates of the Municipal Prison number about 500. The Chinese had few eleemosynary institutions. The family looked after the individual.

Another advantage is the spirit of self-sacrifice for the family which this system produced. Nowhere is there more sacrifice of self for the sake of the family than in China. When this same sacrifice is transferred to the country and humanity we shall enter a new world.

Such a system works well in ordinary times. When drought of flood afflict the land large numbers of helpless individuals are loosened from their ancestral place and wander over the land. They lack initiative and energy to shift for themselves.

The Chinese act together readily especially when excited by fear. The strikes in the schools, the boycotts, the panics which sweep over whole cities and districts show the weakness of the system. There is not a sufficient number of individuals strong enough to stem the tide.

The question has been raised whether this impersonal culture is racial or is due to the social system. The fact that we have passed through a similar stage of culture and that there are evidences of a personal culture among the Chinese is sufficient proof that this is not a racial trait.

The impact of the West upon China has broken up this impersonal system and loosened the individual from his social moorings. The old system yielded slowly but surely to the hard blows of western individualism. The Chinese moral and religious system rested upon the dogma that China was elected by Heaven to rule the world. The Chi-

nese called their country T'ien-hsia, all under heaven. The rulers of China believed in the election of other nations, but they were elected to be ruled by the Chinese. This belief of the Chinese was little appreciated by the early traders, diplomats and missionaries. In 1792 the Chinese government permitted trade with Russia. This trade had been prohibited by the Chinese. The communication of the Chinese Emperor on this occasion reveals the high position which he assumes. He said:

> Inasmuch as the great Emperor loves all men alike he cannot endure to have the subjects of your realm suffer because of the closing of the trade with China. You have earnestly prayed that this trade may be reopened. Such request is hereby granted. If, however, further trouble should arise then all hope of reopening the trade will be in vain.

In 1793 as Macartney, the British Ambassador, sailed up the Pei Ho to Peking the Chinese put a flag on his boat which had the words "A messenger from the vassal country England bearing tribute to China." Even as late as 1873 when the ambassadors were received in imperial audience without the *kowtow*, the Chinese authorities explained that this privilege was granted by the Son of Heaven in view of the fact that these barbarians did not have opportunity of learning the proper etiquette.

The ruthless blows of the West shattered this dogma which was supporting not only the political system, but was also at the basis of the religious system. The early wars, the disastrous war with Japan, the Boxer Uprising, the Russo-Japanese War and lastly the revolution, knocked away the last support of this dogma.

Chinese civilization rested on another pillar which bolstered up this impersonal culture and tied the individual to the past. This was the position of the Emperor. The Emperor was called the Son of Heaven. The country was called the Kuo-chia, or family state. The Emperor was the mediator between Heaven and men. The revolution broke up this ancient idea. The ghost of the empire still lingers and looms up occasionally, but its ancient sway is departed. The system has been shattered, the fragments

still remain. Some of them will be built into the new social and political order which is now rising in China.

While these forces were breaking up the old system of China, there were others that were slowly making preparation for the new day. These constructive forces were preparing the individual for the new world. One of the most persistent of these forces is the missionary propaganda. The early missionaries came to China with an exalted idea of the worth of the individual. They were borne upon the great wave which produced the American and French revolutions with their mottoes of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. These men valued men because they had immortal souls, and taught them and inspired them. They had the poorest material to work on, but they did wonders making pillars of the Church out of pirates, and martyrs out of common clay.

They not only loosened the individual from his ancient moorings, but they were providing him with a compass and rules of the road on the uncharted sea of life. The missionary propaganda may be regarded as the training of personality, the latest flower of our Christian civilization. The work has scarcely begun. The task is large and difficult. The first materials were from the poor and insignificant and their influence was not large. Still a great work has been done. About 200,000 boys and girls are being trained in Christian schools. The Protestant Christian constituency has not yet passed the million mark, yet this small body of individuals has had an influence in China quite out of proportion to its numbers and its social standing. The missions and the Church have been the pioneers in all sorts of eleemosynary work, anti-footbinding, anti-opium, social improvement and modern education. All these movements are directed toward the welfare of the individual.

Another great factor in this development has been the returned student. He came back with a vision and many of them have remained true to their vision though they had to suffer for it. They have been able to translate the ideas of the West into the ideas of the East. They have been concrete examples and exponents of the new individual.

One of the most potent agencies in developing the new individual was the anti-opium movement. This great struggle enlisted the best men of China who gave themselves unreservedly to it. They came into contact with all sorts of people, diplomats, merchants and missionaries. I well remember a scene in China when the authorities of Foochow reduced the shops selling opium by retail. A subject of a foreign power decided to take advantage of the situation and under the protection of extra-territoriality opened a retail shop and was doing a rushing business. The gentry called a conference of those interested. They set the case before this conference and then made suggestions as to how the case might be handled. In a week the man was out of the business and no one else was tempted to follow his example. The anti-opium movement was one of the best means for the preparation of the revolution. It trained the gentry in resourcefulness, devotion to high ideals, developed initiative and coöperation.

The various agencies at work for the overthrow of the Manchus were all the product of the new individualism on one side and on the other were training schools for the rising individual. The outbreak of the revolution manifested a spirit of the finest sort. Men were touched by patriotism and for the time being transformed into new beings. As far as the fighting went, the revolutionaries made a glorious failure. They were outclassed by the well-trained northern army. Their spirit, however, was invincible. They were composed of a mixed crowd of coolies, students and soldiers. They were untrained and inexperienced. But they fought like heroes. A few companies came to Hankow without weapons. Rather than wait for their weapons they attacked the railway station, drove out the Manchu regulars and took over the arms and ammunition. Many of the wounded ran away from the hospital and entered the fighting lines.

This description by an eye witness of the battle about Hankow reveals the mettle of the new individual.

> The battle at Kilometer Ten was a splendid exhibition of gameness and pluck on the part of the rebels. Although they were

outnumbered by the trained forces of the Imperialists in front of them and were subjected from the flank to a racking fire from Admiral Sah's war-ships, they held their ground until nearly five hundred had been killed and fifteen hundred wounded. At last they were compelled to retire. Their ranks were broken, but there was no panic. The advance of the Imperialists was a splendid justification of the training which the Northern troops have received under European instructors. Ten thousand strong, they crossed into the rebel territory during the night and attacked the entrenched rebels at daybreak Friday morning. These were behind well-planned fortifications and had little to fear from the attack. It was the guns of Admiral Sah's fleet that finally decided the day against them. . . . . The range was short and the guns mercilessly poured in shells upon the rear of the rebels' position. The slaughter was appalling. The rebels replied ineffectively and were finally silenced. Gunboats drew nearer and the revolutionists were compelled to retire. The Loyalists, whose losses were slight, advanced on the abandoned trenches in splendid order under cover of the ships, capturing fifteen field guns and taking many Republicans prisoners.

But the rebels were not yet satisfied. They returned to the fray in the afternoon, bringing reinforcements, fresh field guns, and Maxims. They advanced at double-quick, cheering like schoolboys. They attacked the Royalists, but the fight was one-sided. The trained Imperialist soldiers raked the armed rebels in front of them with their rapid firing guns and modern rifles, but the rebels held their ground gamely but were ultimately compelled to withdraw. They saved their field guns and carried off their wounded.

This spirit has not departed. It is the spirit which is moving many ardent patriots today. It is the spirit which is making for progress among the people. While the governments are changing in Peking with kaleidoscopic rapidity, while one faction ousts another, the people awakened are plodding along making China a better country.

The government does not yet represent the people. It will be some time before China will have a sufficient number of awakened individuals who will coöperate together and make themselves felt in the government. There are at present two governments, one functioning at Peking and the other in Canton, each pretending to represent the republic. As a matter of fact there is little to choose between them from the point of view of the patriotic citizen.

The fear of encroachments by Japan and the inroads of the western powers have revealed the power of the individ-

ual in China. Just after the Japanese war it was said that certain officials in China did not know that a war had been fought and lost. What was worse, some of them did not care. In 1915, after the notorious twenty-one demands of Japan were made on China, the people were thoroughly aroused. A resident of the City of Hankow, for example, says:

> On the day following the ninth of May, a day not to be forgotten, the people were mad with rage. Seeing nothing could be done, some suggested they should in some way demonstrate the people's profound sorrow. It was proposed that there should be no lights in the whole city that evening. During the day the proposal passed from mouth to mouth and when the sunlight had disappeared, bustling Hankow was pitch dark and dead silent. All doors were shut, no business, no traffic. Several of my friends gathered in my home. We talked about the danger to China. We sighed and shed tears, upon which my two little boys did the same.

And just recently as a result of the secret understanding between China and Japan which seemed to endanger China's independence, the Chinese students have left Japan in large numbers.

The press has been an important factor in the awakening of the individual. At present there are about three hundred newspapers in China. The number varies in direct proportion to the republican character of the government. When Yuan Shih Kai was planning to found a new dynasty with himself as the first emperor, the newspapers which resisted him were sealed. Some of them transferred their offices to the foreign concessions and kept up their agitation for a Chinese Republic. While the circulation of papers in China is not very large their influence extends beyond the actual readers. They are broadening the interests of the new individual.

The greatest development of the individual has taken place among the women. The woman movement has burst out suddenly in all parts of China. Even before the revolution the women were preparing for the new age. Some of them gave their lives for their country. One of the pioneers in the revolutionary movement was Ch'iu Chin, of

the Province of Chekiang, who gave her life for the republic as early as 1907. She was a woman of great ability. A prefect once presented her with two scrolls which expressed her characteristics: "Taking an active part in the battle of life, she shows a masculine superiority to the whole world."

During the revolution the women of China revealed that their narrow life could not quench the human spirit. Many girls ran away from school and joined dare-to-die bands. They served with the Red Cross on the battle front. They were frequently under fire and some of them were wounded. After the revolution the women entered a larger life. Foot-binding is disappearing in the larger centers. The women move about more freely. The girls are becoming athletic. Some of them can drive automobiles. They are giving their attention to schools and reform work of various kinds.

The individuality of the girls in well-to-do families has been recognized in arranging a marriage. They are consulted. In some instances the young people have been given an opportunity to meet each other before marriage. Still the struggle against the old impersonal system has not been won. The tragedy of life comes when the new faces the old. The young people want to choose their own calling in life, they want to select their life companion, they long to establish a home of their own, they want to be true to the awakened conscience within them and they find the past dominating their life and forcing it into the ancient moulds. Still the stars are fighting with the new individual and the victory is assured.

This new personality is not merely an ebullition on the surface of life in China. It has been recognized in the political, educational and religious aims and enactments. The constitution of the Chinese Republic has not been adopted yet, but the draft completed in 1917 recognizes the Chinese citizen. It makes all men equal before the law. It recognizes his personal responsibility before the law. It gives him a voice in the government. It secures those rights and privileges which are the common heritage of the West. While these rights and privileges are more or less theoretical, still they have been recognized and will be attained in due time.

Perhaps more radical and more far-reaching has been the change of attitude in the educational aims of China. The Manchu dynasty abolished the old educational system and adopted modern education. Although it adopted western methods, it did not adopt western ideals. The aim of education was to insure the stability and wellbeing of the Manchu government. The individual did not come within its horizon. Under the Manchus the aim of modern education was to develop the following virtues: loyalty to the Emperor, reverence for Confucius, devotion to public welfare, admiration for the martial spirit and respect for industrial pursuits. The new education followed the aims of the old. Under the Republic a new theory is slowly evolving according to which the aim of education is conceived as the cultivation of a moral and virtuous character. This moral education is to be supplemented by an industrial and military education rounded by aesthetic culture. Tsai Yüan Pei, the first minister of education defined moral education as imparting to the people the right knowledge of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The focus of attention is shifting from the group to the individual. Still the individual is not isolated. His position is improved in order that he might have a share in establishing a new republic.

Perhaps the most significant recognition of the new individual has come from the religious side. The religious nexus binds the individual with the past and the severing of this tie has done a great deal to start the individual on the road to freedom.

Article XIX of the draft of the permanent constitution originally made Confucianism the basis of moral instruction. This article was dropped and Article XI was changed to read as follows:

> The citizens of the Republic of China shall have liberty to honor Confucius and shall enjoy freedom of religious worship, which shall be unrestricted except in accordance with law.

This article was not achieved without struggle, but that it was achieved reveals how far the Chinese have departed from the idea of moral and religious unity of the Manchu dynasty.

The rise of the individual in politics, education and religion marks a new era in China. As we face the problem of making the world safe for democracy China faces the problem of making the individual fit for democracy. This is one of the great tasks in the renovation of this ancient country. It is a task in which the United States will have a large share. As we have stood for the open door, as we have led China to declare war on the side of the allies, so by our example and by the various impacts of our rich life we shall help China to enter this era after the war with a citizenship coöperating together in a new China and making her contribution to a world democracy.